



PUBLIC DISCLOSURE COMMISSION

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CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM LEGISLATION MOVES IN STATE HOUSE

Olympia – Two measures reforming campaign finance laws in Washington have passed the State House of Representatives with bi-partisan support.

House Bill 1144 requires that so-called “issue ads”, last minute advertising that usually attacks an individual on issues but does not directly urge people to vote for or against a candidate, be reportable within 24 hours when presented to the public. The legislation passed the State House by a vote of 76 to 22.

Issue ads were used extensively by groups and organizations in the 2004 campaigns. Such ads focusing on candidates for Governor and Attorney General were aired just before the election but were either not reported or under-reported.

“The public has a right to know who is sponsoring advertisements intended to influence voters and the outcome of an election”, said PDC Executive Director Vicki Rippie. “Campaign tactics have evolved and Washington’s laws need to keep pace.”

Current law requires all political advertising, including independent expenditure ads, to provide the names of persons sponsoring the political messages.

The legislation would bring Washington State into conformity with the United States Supreme Court ruling of *McConnell v. FEC* (2003) which upheld the constitutionality of the disclosure of issue ads in a manner similar to other political advertising.

House Bill 1143 which increases the Public Disclosure Commissions penalty authority from \$1,000 to \$4,000 for a single violation and from \$2,500 to \$10,000 for multiple violations passed the House by a vote of 63 to 35. The legislation would also provide additional time to investigate citizens' complaints.

Vicki Rippie, Executive Director of the Disclosure Commission, said this bill would allow the Commission to handle the more serious violations administratively rather than sending those enforcement cases to the Attorney General's Office for action in Superior Court.

"This legislation has the support of both Governor Gregoire and Attorney General McKenna", Rippie said. "It's important that we look for ways to make government run more efficiently and effectively. This measure will help the Commission to accomplish both of these objectives."

The bills now go to the State Senate for consideration.

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